

# Legislation and Policy

**T**he United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Society of American Foresters (SAF) have joined together to provide better technical assistance to private landowners.

In July of this year the USDA and SAF signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will help landowners obtain assistance in forest management. This partnership will provide a much-needed service for landowners who need technical support in the development of forest management plans for their property. SAF-certified foresters will help the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) expand its capabilities and meet the enormous demand for Farm Bill conservation programs.

The five-year MOU allows SAF to recommend its certified individuals to the USDA to provide technical services in forest management and agro-forestry practices. Their work must meet USDA standards and specifications for effective forest management. The 2002 Farm Bill expanded the availability of technical assistance to private landowners by encouraging the use of third parties.

These technical service providers will assist the USDA in delivering conservation technical support services to forest owners, farmers, ranchers, and others.

The certified specialists will be placed on a national, web-based registry called TechReg that is available to anyone seeking conservation technical assistance on their property. This list can be accessed at <http://techreg.usda.gov>.

## In Washington

### State and Private Forestry

Overall, State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs changed little from Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 funding levels. The House of Representatives allocated \$290.8 million for S&PF in FY 2004, compared to \$284.6 million in FY 2003. The Senate Appropriations Committee increased the House mark to \$295.3 million.

The most significant differences are found in the Forest Legacy and Economic Action Programs. The House provided only \$45.6 million for Forest Legacy, a drop from the \$68.4 million allocated in FY 2003, while the Senate

increased the Legacy budget to \$84.7 million.

### National Fire Plan

Both the House and Senate have provided increased funding for the National Fire Plan, which in FY 2003 received an appropriation of \$1.4 million. While the Senate Appropriations Committee set the 2004 mark at \$1.5 million, the House approved a total of \$1.6 million for the coming year.

### Forest Inventory and Analysis

The House mark includes \$9 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) in State and Private Forestry Programs, and \$49.4 million in Forest and Rangelands Research. The Senate Appropriations Committee combined the funds into a single line item of \$57.4 million under Forest and Rangelands Research. The S&PF programs will receive FIA funding from the Research budget line item. ♣

*(Information taken from the **Washington Update**, National Association of State Foresters; Volume 19, Number 3; August 2003.)*

## Direct Seeding Oak Acorns

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should be soaked in water at room temperature for 24 to 48 hours.

Properly stored, red oak acorns can be stored for up to three years.

- To reduce animal predation on the acorns once planted, it is best to choose planting areas larger than two acres and preferably not surrounded by forest. Predation will be worse along the forest edge where wildlife frequents. Sites should be fairly well-

drained and not with heavy clay soils (see a professional forester for specific site requirements for each oak species).

- Sowing depth of two to three inches seems to favor germination.
- Seeds can be sown by hand, although commercial planting machines are now available.

The initial growth rate will be slower for seedlings that originate from direct seeding. Also, they can't tolerate strong herbicide rates which are important for early weed control.

Direct seeding is a viable alternative to restoring farm land to hardwood forests. Explore it. ♣

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**Reference:** Sims, Daniel. 1986. U.S. Forest Service.

## Oops! We goofed . . .

In the Summer 2003 issue of *Alabama's TREASURED Forests*, we mistakenly identified Mr. Evan Frank Allison in the photo on page 29 as the man "with the cigar." We regret this error and are happy to set the record straight. -- The Editor